

Pomeroy Family Tomb
Magnolia Cemetery lot #5
Mobile
Mobile County
Alabama

HABS No. ALA-785

HABS
ALA,
49-MOBI,
118-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ALA-785

POMEROY FAMILY TOMB

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ALA,

49-MOBI,

Location: Magnolia Cemetery, Mobile, Mobile County, Alabama
Geographic Location Code: 01-2100-097

Present Owners: Heirs of Porter B. Pomeroy

Statement of This is one of two identical tombs in Magnolia Cemetery
Significance: that are brick structures entirely sheathed by cast-iron
panels and lavishly decorated with Classical motifs.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1860
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: Porter B. Pomeroy apparently died in 1860, when his name disappears from the Mobile City Directories. Whether the mausoleum was constructed before his death, or later by his wife and sons, has not been determined, but considering the economic climate and the availability of iron during the Civil War, it seems likely that the tomb was finished before the War.
4. Builder or contractor; suppliers: Although the Pomeroy tomb appears to be unmarked, the identical family tomb of Hope H. Slatter, located some distance from the Pomeroy tomb in the same cemetery, has a small plaque at the bottom of the door which undoubtedly identifies the foundry, and appears to include its location and a date. Unfortunately, innumerable coats of paint have made the inscription illegible.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

Porter B. Pomeroy was an important feed merchant in Mobile, establishing his business as P.B. Pomeroy & Co. in 1843. Later a partner in the firm of Pomeroy & Marshall, the offices and stores of the firm occupied the entire waterfront district block bounded by Dauphin, Commerce, Water Streets and Exchange Alley. The firm appears to have dissolved in 1861 after the death of Pomeroy.

C. Bibliography:

Directory for the City of Mobile, Mobile: Farrow & Dennett, 1859, 1861.

Wood, Edwin T., Mobile Directory and Register for 1844, Mobile: Dade and Thompson, 1844.

Prepared by Charles A. Herrington
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
August 9, 1972

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The cast iron which encases this simple rectangular structure is undoubtedly a collection of stock panels, as evidenced by the existence of two identical tombs. Adorned by Classical motifs and painted white, the structures resemble Italian Renaissance marble tombs.
2. Condition of fabric: Although the iron has begun to deteriorate and there are a few missing pieces, it is protected generally by several coats of white paint, which unfortunately have obscured the sharpness of the details. The Slatter tomb is in good condition, with all the pieces intact.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The mausoleum is a rectangular block measuring 10'-3" x 7'-6" above the marble foundation. It is 7'-10" from grade to cornice.
2. Foundations: The foundation wall above grade consists of 6"-high stuccoed brick, above which is a marble sill 7" high.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: All walls above the marble base are sheathed with $\frac{1}{4}$ " cast-iron plates, painted white. The walls rise above a moulded base and are marked at the corners and in the center of the long sides by vermiculated quoins. Between the quoins are moulded vertical panels in relief. An acanthus band marks the bottom of a frieze that is adorned on the sides and rear by opposing griffins with elaborate tails; on the side over the entrance, the frieze bears the inscription: "Family Tomb". Below the frieze, and over the door, the inscription is continued: "Of P.B. Pomeroy". Above the frieze is a moulded overhanging cornice with a large acanthus leaf falling over each corner. Above the cornice is a low parapet that rises slightly at the center of each side and at the corners. These sections are adorned with anthemias, which serve as antefixes. The ensemble could be called a cymatium, but its profile gives an effect similar to acroteria. The variance from the Classical norm is underscored by the decorative forms themselves; rather than being strictly Classical, the fanciful anthemias appear to be based on forms employed as margin drolleries in late medieval manuscripts. This derivation is particularly evident in the elaborate decoration over the entrance, where a roundel is supported by fluttering plants which terminate in horned bird heads. The roundel contains a curious relief: an angel in flowing garments, aided by a

small cherub, shelters in his lap a small male figure. 49 Moos: 118.
Considering that this relief adorns a tomb, it would be reasonable to assume that it represents the soul of the departed in the arms of his guardian angel, but strangely enough, the small figure has a halo and raises his arm in benediction, a pose that is generally associated with the Christ Child. As an example of the Classical Revival style of the mid-nineteenth century, the over-all design of the tomb is extremely interesting. Especially when viewed through the elaborate Gothic fence that encloses the Slatter tomb, the effect is a careful recreation of the transitional style between High Gothic and Renaissance.

4. Structural system, framing: There are brick bearing walls beneath the cast iron.
5. Doorways and doors: There is a single door, 3'-7" x 6'-0", which is a single cast-iron plate hung on two heavy 8" hinges. In the center in relief is a Classical funeral torch, upside-down and entwined with ribbons.
6. Roof: There is a low-pitched gabled roof covered with cast-iron plates with interlocking batten joints.

C. Description of Interior:

The interior was inaccessible.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The mausoleum is located in lot # 5 of Magnolia Cemetery facing west.
2. Landscaping: The Pomeroy tomb has no enclosure or landscaping. The Slatter tomb, however, is a complete ensemble; it is enclosed by an elaborate and magnificently detailed Gothic Revival cast-iron fence with high gate and corner posts surmounted by Classical urns. The enclosed space is paved with marble. It is doubtful that the Pomeroy tomb ever included the fence, although it appears to have been an integral part of the design.

Prepared by Woodrow W. Wilkins
Supervising Architect
National Park Service
August 11, 1966
and
Charles A. Herrington
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
August 9, 1972

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as a cooperative project during the summer of

1966 between the Historic American Buildings Survey and various agencies, organizations, and individuals of the City of Mobile. The Historic American Buildings Survey supplied the project supervisor, Woodrow W. Wilkins, and three draughtsmen, Carl J. Rosenberg (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Michael R. Foil (Auburn University), and Lowell K. West (University of Kentucky). One draughtsman, Elbert L. Coleman (Alabama A & M), was provided by the Mobile Housing Board, which agency administers urban renewal. The services of an additional draughtsman, James Eley, specifically designated as an architectural student from Auburn University, were made possible by contributions from numerous local architects and businessmen. The Historic Mobile Preservation Society, in agreement with the History Department of Springhill College, provided a student historian, Linda Carroll. Office space was supplied by the City of Mobile through the City Planning Commission. Roy Thigpen, a local photographer, was contracted to supply the photographs. All local arrangements were made by the Mobile Historic Development Commission, Mrs. Nancy N. Holmes, President. The project was edited during the summer of 1972 by Charles A. Herrington, Architectural Historian, in a cooperative effort between the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Mobile Historic Development Commission.

Addendum to
Pomeroy Family Tomb
Magnolia Cemetery, Virginia St.
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PHOTOGRAPHS